



Seabirds and Shorebirds of Pacheca and Pachequilla Islands

Las Perlas Archipelago,
Panama

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The Gulf of Panama is a marine ecosystem at the crossroads of the Americas. Its biodiversity of breeding birds is enriched every year with migratory species from the north and from the southern cold-water currents. Within the gulf, the Pearl Islands are internationally recognized as a hotspot for breeding seabirds and shorebirds. And within the islands, Pacheca is the single most important nesting site, home to thousands of pairs of some of the species featured below. These birds are an indicator of the health of the entire gulf.

Conserving these species and habitats is key to the responsible development of tourism on the Pearl Islands, in which ecotourism has a valuable role to play. A great example is birdwatching, a sustainable activity which doesn't deplete the resources on which it relies and facilitates local and global awareness of biodiversity. We hope that the rich birdlife of the islands will serve as an inspiration to local conservation efforts and an attraction for visitors from far and wide!

Here is a brief introduction to ten of our most common birds.



Whimbrel

Zarapito Trinador
Numenius phaeopus

Whimbrels are long-distance migrants, breeding in the Arctic tundra and wintering along coastlines all the way down to South America. They look mostly brown, but notice their long, curved bills, which they use to probe the beach sand for food.



Spotted Sandpiper

Playero Coleador
Actitis macularius

These sandpipers may look rather drab but are easily recognized by their constant tail bobbing or “teetering” behavior. They are common in Panama except during June and July, when they are away at their breeding grounds in the US and Canada.

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Magnificent Frigatebird

Fragata Magnífica
Fregata magnificens

Isla Pacheca hosts Panama's second largest frigatebird breeding colony, after Isla Iguana, off the coast of Pedasí, Los Santos. At these colonies, males can be seen inflating their red throat pouches to attract females. Frigatebirds can't dive into the water because their feathers aren't waterproof, so they get their food by skimming off the surface or by stealing from other birds!

3



Blue-footed Booby

Piquero Patiazul
Sula nebouxii

This species only occurs in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, where they breed on cliffs and offshore islands from Mexico south to Peru, including the Galapagos Islands and the Pearl Islands. They use their bright blue feet in an elaborate courtship dance to attract mates.

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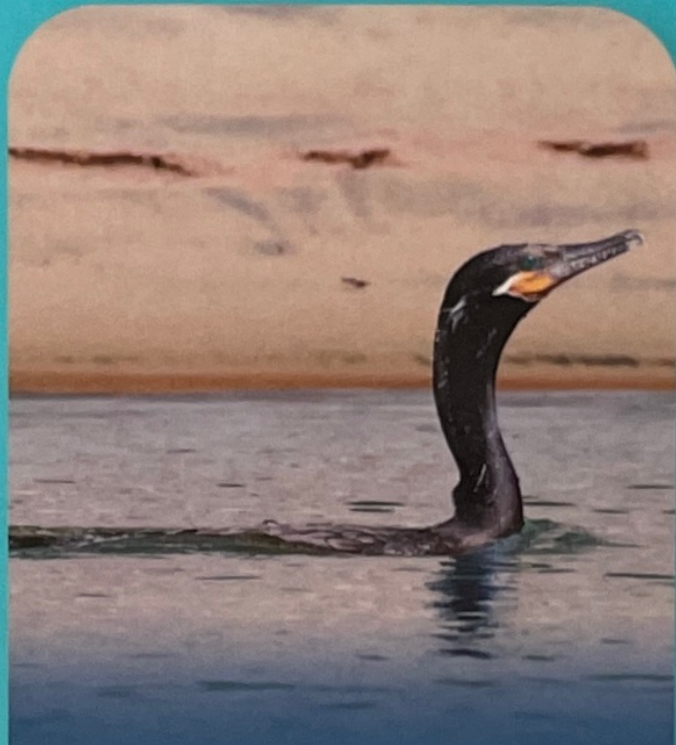


Brown Booby

Piquero Pardo
Sula leucogaster

The word “booby” comes from the Spanish term “bobo” (stupid). The name was given by sailors who found these seabirds to be tame, clumsy, and easy to hunt. Brown Boobies are found in tropical waters all around the globe and breed on many tropical islands including the Pearl Islands.

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Neotropic Cormorant

Cormorán Neotropical
Nannopterum brasilianum

Cormorants can be seen flying over the ocean in large flocks, as well as nesting in trees on the islands. They catch fish by diving underwater. They are colloquially known as “paticuervos” for their webbed feet and black plumage.

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Brown Pelican

Pelícano Pardo
Pelecanus occidentalis

One of our most common seabirds in Panama, Brown Pelicans are a familiar sight as they glide over the water in V-shaped flocks and dive headfirst to catch fish in their bill pouches. They occur in both the Caribbean and the Pacific and nest on the Pearl Islands.

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Bare-throated Tiger-Heron

Garza-Tigre Cuellinuda
Tigrisoma mexicanum

This unique heron is named after its striped plumage and bare yellow throat. They are found in both coastal and freshwater habitats. They are rare in mainland Panama and declining from habitat loss but are still common on the Pearl Islands and Coiba Island.

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Great Egret

Garceta Grande
Ardea alba

The Great Egret is a common and familiar wading bird in habitats all around the world. On the Pearl Islands, they stand out on the shoreline with their tall stature, all-white plumage, and yellow bills. They nest here beginning in February.

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Yellow-crowned Night-Heron

Garza-Nocturna
Cabeciamarilla
Sula leucogaster

Despite its name, this heron is easy to see in the daytime in coastal habitats like the Pearl Islands. Its favorite food is crabs. Some Yellow-crowned Night-Herons live here year-round, whereas others are migratory and only occur here from around September to March.

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